

OCT. 17-23

MATWATCH

213 PINE HILLS AVE. AUBURN, AL. 36830 (205) 826-7522

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STEVE'S SIDELIGHTS By Steve Beverly

THE CASE
OF THE NWA
MAIN EVENT

Perry Mason needs to be brought in to get to the bottom of this.

Once upon a time, circa April 1988, was born a wrestling program holding the promise of being the most attractive TV package since Bill Watts' UWF was sold. One top writer even compared it to the popular Japan brand of TV grappling.

That first week, NWA MAIN EVENT was hot! Even aging Dusty Rhodes offered a decent performance in pinning Ivan Koloff. And though a semi-screw job (Tully used Knucks), we were endeared to a great 6-man match with The Three Horsemen defeating Sting, Lex Luger & Barry Windham. The crowd was rabid, the announcing first-rate and our expectation level was on the ceiling.

Boy, were we fooled! First, TBS violated a cardinal rule by moving MAIN EVENT in its second week to Saturday a.m. for four shows with little promotion. That murdered West Coast viewership.

Then, a teased Flair/Anderson vs. Luger/Windham tag match dissolved into Lex vs. Arn---not bad but certainly no high-ticket item.

After a series of average clashes, suddenly people of the ilk of Italian Stallion, Gary Royal and even Big Bear Collie (who had one match air three times) began creeping into the show and you may as well have dropped the word MAIN from the title.

Then, as if a potent death serum had been administered, mid-July relegated MAIN EVENT to a series of studio voiceovers by Jim Ross & Tony Schiavone, who make the best of it but are wasted outside the ambience of a crowd. Plus, the hideous backdrop on which Jim & Tony sit looks like a leftover piece of styrofoam from a refrigerator packing crate.

This was to be a show where featured performers collected large one-show bonuses. We've heard how the payoffs never materialized: plus, now when matches aren't 3-4 months old, we borrow from the NWA's two syndicated shows to fill the hour.

In my view, there's a threefold blane: (1) the ever-present Mr. Runnels, whom we're told never favored the original NME plan and---as one insider tells it---"has done his best to kill it"; (2) the NWA's organizational chaos in the midst of "is Ted Turner buying us?" uncertainty; and (3) TBS itself. I'm rare to question the Tiffany of cable networks and I recognize reorganizing the NWA on TBS will take time. But NME was designed to build WTBS' ratings and it has not done so. Consequently, I can't believe TBS has not leaned more on Jim Crockett to produce the quality program we were promised.

I certainly hope TBS intends to address this. For one thing, if the announcers are to be used to their potential, this should be a Sunday showcase for Ross. Schiavone can carry the ball fine on Saturday with Jim and he's a fine "umbrella" host for NME. But this should be the hot arena show to spotlight Ross's great play-by-play drama in the old UWF tradition. It needs hot showclosers (not the abrupt anger-inducing cutoffs of NWA PRO & WORLD WIDE) that allow Ross to turn up the adrenaline a notch and belt the commentary like a torch singer doing "You Made Me Love You."

Most of you watched and waited eagerly for the weekly UWF effort, did you not? That ought to be the guidebook to success with NWA MAIN EVENT and I'm sure it's the message most discerning fans would send to the Turner people.

As an added fillip, Tony could do an "NWA THIS WEEK" segment between matches to recap key events on the circuit of the past seven days. It would be a welcome change from the generic plugs and reviews advance taping brings.

Plus, it's a perfect spot to review key angles and studio bouts from the Saturday show to keep fans hooked for the following weekend.

In other words, it should be back to basics with what should be the class wrestling program on TV and is currently anything but. Otherwise, the NWA MAIN EVENT is about at the level of a video version of MY WEEKLY READER. Your witness, Mr. Mason.

RATINGS RAP

Weekend Ending Sept. 18

	Rating	Stations	Pct. / U.S.
WWF	9.0	253	96%
NWA	5.0	148	90%
All-Pro	4.2	118	80%

(ANALYSIS: Last week's reversal which gave the NWA its first win ever has been credited to factoring CLASH IV into the ratings and a change of time period for WWF PRIME TIME on USA. One factor for this week's major NWA drop is the number of its shows in late-night slots which faced the Olympics head-on.)

COMINGS & GOINGS

---Eddie Gilbert headed back to the NWA as a babyface. I'll go on record calling it a mistake. If they don't explain this with an angle, it has no credibility with Mid-South or CNF fans who know Eddie as a perpetual heel. He'll team with Jimmy Garvin when Gorgeous returns but Eddie is a prime candidate for a Horseman.

---I'm told a key reason Paul E. Dangerously isn't being imported for a Dennis Condrey/Randy Rose vs. Eaton & Lane feud is heat still exists from Condrey's '87 departure.

---Abdullah the Butcher starts soon with the NWA. It won't impact much but maybe Gary Hart can get him over.

---More on Steamboat/NWA talks: negotiations are through Ricky's agent. I'm told it's for a one-show deal at STARRCADE. Plus, another key source says Ricky has major objections to working if Dusty Rhodes books and the source believes if Ricky signs, it's the beginning of the end for Virgil.

---Jerry Jarrett has assumed titular control of World Class with his buyout of Ken Mantell's shares. But some insiders say Jarrett is being pumped for his investment and is vulnerable to a future power play. I hope the Memphis promoter is too shrewd for that.

---Mantell has reportedly regained use of the Wild West monicker as part of his sellout and is said to be plotting a restart in both Texas and California.

---Expect Nelson Royal's foray into a Carolinas promotion to launch as early as December.

---Early post-Gilbert CNF business is down. Montgomery drew \$3,400 for the Oct. 9 TV taping. Business in Dothan declined the night before.

---Lord Humongous reportedly is on his way to Memphis. If so, that scratches him from this Sunday's Montgomery card vs. Kokina. The same night The Bullet meets Tony Anthony in a strap match and Tom Prichard defends the CNF belt against Jerry Stubbs.

---The CNF/FNN show for Saturday is back on track. Not as hot as Eddie's shows but with two action matches (Riches vs. Anthony/Stubbs and Willie B. Hart vs. Ken Wayne) and a good semi-squash between Austin Idol & Mark Pyle. Idol is rumored departing, too.

---The Oct. 29 CNF/FNN show features the return of Brad Armstrong in a hot angle saving Prichard from a gang attack at the hands of Anthony & Stubbs.

---Dutch Mantel is green as color man but delivered three great lines (see TV [MPO] last weekend and has a country boy approach that's appealing.

---My buddy Charlie Platt is recovering from disc and sciatic problems. I can think of a great way for Charlie's wife to torture him but that's another story.

---Tatsumi Fujinami is working some U.S. shows. A word to the wise at TBS: that's the kind of talent you need for one-shots in the NWA.

---The inclusion of Nikita Kolooff vs. Russian Assassin II (Jack Victory) on Saturday's TBS p.m. show may be indicative of better things to come but they'll have to improve on that to boost ratings.

---Early word is that the Road Warriors' attack on Sting went over "okay" but was disappointing. Expect a Warriors vs. Sting/Luger feud in November but I hope rumored plans to reteam Sting with the hot Rick Steiner soon are not with the idea of diluting Sting's value.

---Speculation centers on Steve Williams likely to switch to the Varsity Club but the NWA is turning way too many people in a 6-month period.

---My vote is to kill the Horseman angle. I'm told, in addition to Greg Valentine, feelers have been sent to Bob Orton Jr. and (I hope this is just talk) Tommy Rich as potential Horsemen. I think it's long overdue to kill this Our Gang revival and let Flair stand alone as the champion he should be.

---The new BEST OF STARRCADE tape includes new material for the home market, including the 1983 Flair-Race title match, the Valentine-Piper dog collar clash, a Steamboat U.S. title shot and Jack & Jerry Brisco's world tag team title win over Wahoo McDaniel & Mark Youngblood.

---The STARRCADE '88 theme for Norfolk is TRUE GRIT. Who is the bright soul who keeps doubling the consonants? Frankly, I'd like to buy a vowel.

---Finally, in 3 weeks, your first MATWATCH AWARDS ballot. It will strictly cover U.S. TV wrestling with some special categories. Ballots out Nov. 7 & 14.

YOU SAID IT...

The only wrestling show being shown here locally now is NWA World Wide, that's all. First, the WWF pulled out, now World Class; my how the once mighty have fallen. Oh, well.

VICTOR MARTINEZ
LUBBOCK TX

* * * * * M A T W A T C H E X T R A * * * * *

WORLD CLASS COTTON BOWL CARD

Saturday, October 15

AWA VS. WORLD CLASS TITLES

Kerry Von Erich d. Jerry Lawler (but belts do not change)

In another weird match in this series, the two split falls in a Texas Death Match (before which both men agreed to divest themselves of foreign objects but Lawler retained a taped piece of pipe). In the third fall, during a ref bump, Kerry grabbed one of Lawler's objects, slugged Jerry and Frank Dusek entered the ring and made a fast count to award Kerry both belts. However, Eddie Marlin showed up and got into a major brouhaha with Dusek to begin the Texas vs. Tennessee feud these 2 organizations will develop. Kerry did leave with both belts but don't believe that's official.

WORLD CLASS TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP:

Michael Hayes/Steve Cox d. Samoan Swat Team to regain belts.

TERRY GORDY VS. BOTSWANI BEAST:

Ends in double countout as the two engage in out-of-ring dance as opposed to brawl that left fans dissatisfied.

KEVIN VON ERICH VS. BRIAN ADIAS:

Kevin is jumped by Super Black Ninja and Kendo Nagasaki to earn a DQ win in what was called a bad match.

WORLD LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE:

Jeff Jarrett d. Eric Embry to win belt. Perhaps the first influence of Jerry Jarrett at the controls.

TEXAS HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP:

Kendall Windham & Iceman Parsons end in double countout but have rematches all over the circuit.

BLACK BART/JIMMY JACK FUNK VS.

BLACKJACK MULLIGAN/WILD BILL IRWIN

Mulligan & Irwin win by pinfall and no one turns.

HANDICAP MATCH:

Super Black Ninja defeats four opponents handily, including Tony Torres, Bob Bradley & Vince Apollo.

CHIGUSA NAGAYO VS. CANDI DIVINE:

Chigusa destroys Candi, who didn't know how to work with her.

JIMMY VALIANT/MACHO MIDGET VS. TIM BROOKS/MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Valiant & Macho win in a match in which the nicknames weren't exploited.

STEVE CASEY VS. TUG TAYLOR

Casey takes the opener.

SPECIAL NOTES: At the Sportatorium Friday night, Kerry & Kevin were to take on the Swat Team but Kendo Nagasaki jumped Kevin so Kerry tried to handle the SST alone and, predictably, got in trouble, when Eric Embry jaunted to ringside and force-tagged Kerry to help him. The match ended in a double DQ and people not at the Sportatorium were confused with Embry's appearance to help Kerry in the Cotton Bowl main event.

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There continue to be rumors of a major group starting in California in the next year. Of course, there have been rumors like that for years. I think California would be a great place to anchor a group: the beaches, mountains and "Hollywood lifestyle" would be the perfect background.

DAN FARREN
RESEDA CA

CWF will revert to its prior status as a 3rd rate local promotion without (Eddie) Gilbert. Only the Herculean efforts of the country's best small promotion booker elevated them, however briefly, beyond that status.

Eddie's problem is he doesn't realize he's the best small booker and tries to grow his promotions beyond their means. Also, any organization that can't feed its shows to the cable station is in bad shape.

BILL KUNKEL
WOODHAVEN NY

(FSB: Right on both ends. By the way, Eddie did return the new CWF belt via his brother Doug to end that flap.)

I know one man doesn't make a promotion live or die but can the CWF still do well without him (Gilbert)? I hope this doesn't effect the good headwind the CWF had.

GREG YARMAN
SEVILLE OH

(FSB: In the short run, business will drop for the CWF but if it reorganizes properly, it has a chance to do respectable territorial business. I think its TV shows will be the key.)

YOU SAID IT... is featured monthly in MATWATCH. Your letters are welcome to 213 Pine Hills Ave., Auburn AL 36830.

I REMEMBER: The Unmasking of Assassin I

The Fabulous Kangaroos aside, I saw no better heel tag team in their prime than the Assassins. Talk about consummate heels and masters of the fast-tag, the Assassins were perfect foils for Eddie Graham & Sam Steamboat in the '60s and then began a five-year reign of terror in Georgia rings in 1968.

But I remember the night which shocked the Peach State. It was late November 1972. Georgia wrestling was on a decline in the wake of the death of promotion

owner Ray Gunkel and was in the midst of a crucial business turmoil.

Ed Capral began GEORGIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING on WTCG in his typical aplomb and brought out Assassin I, whom we assumed to be the guest commentator. Ironically, the masked man had operated in a calm, philosophical mood for four straight weeks on the color mike, totally out of character.

As Capral introduced his hooded compatriot, the Assassin began a calm, deliberate, semi-prepared speech of reflection, thanking his family for years of patience, reminiscing about people who had helped him in his career, and reveling in his 14 years in the ring.

With no warning, the man reached for his hood and revealed himself to be Thomas Anthony Renesto, told a stunned audience he would no longer appear as The Assassin and left.

The pronouncement shocked the WTCG crowd into virtual silence for the opening match and legend has it that even Capral was unprepared for the unveiling.

Of course, two weeks later, the NWA-affiliated promotion and Gunkel's widow split forces and Renesto and 24 other wrestlers joined Ann Gunkel's All-South alliance.

It was perhaps the classiest unmasking I've ever seen and a moment that, to this day, stands still in the annals of TV wrestling history. It also fired the first salvo in a bitter promotional war which did not end for two years.

TV TEMPO (Weekend of Oct. 14-16)

RATINGS: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor. PLUS - Midscale rating.

(WWC) - Carlos Colon/TNT d. Hercules Ayala/Ron Starr; Miguel Perez Jr./Hurricane Castillo Jr. d. Bobby Jagers/Dan Kroffat; Rufus R. Jones d. Dan Spivey; Colon d. Chicky Starr in cage match. POWERSLAM.

(MEMPHIS) - Phil Hickerson d. Alan Reynolds; Todd Morton d. Terry Adonis; Jeff Jarrett wins DQ over Jimmy Golden; RPMs d. Scott Steiner/Ken Raper; Bill Dundee/Morton d. Cactus Jack Foley/Gary Young. ANGLE: Stud Stable tries to recruit Morton, who refuses and is beaten to a pulp by Studs but Dundee arrives, says he trained Morton and will help him, which leads to tag match. POWERSLAM-PLUS.

(SCW) - Pre-empted by UFO Special.

(WWF) - SUPERSTARS: Rick Rude d. David Isley; Terry (Red Rooster) Taylor d. Lanny Poffo; Owen Blue Blazer d. Joe Cruze. Other winners: Hart Foundation, Bubba Bossman, Hercules Hernandez, Ron Bass. BROTHER LOVE: Jim Duggan chases Dino Bravo with 2x4. RESTHOLD...for Owen's match. CHALLENGE: Akeem Gang d. Bob Emery; Ted DiBiase d. Isley; Young Stallions d. Sandy Beach/Mike Sharpe. Other winners: Bravo, Rockers,

Anabolic Warrior, Greg Valentine. INTERVIEW: Mean Gene w. Jake & Cheryl Roberts. BOMB.

(LEARNING THE ROPES) - Mark (Yannick Bisson) begins neglecting his schoolwork to play in a rock band. Before his father (Lyle Alzado) suits up to wrestle as The Masked Maniac, Mark meets Ricky Morton in the locker room. Eventually, Mark & Ricky perform together at a local club and Mark announces he's not going to college, much to the dismay of Robert (Alzado). But when Ricky tells Mark he can't tour with him, Mark goes solo. But he realizes he can't go it alone and comes to his senses, all in 22 minutes. MATCHES: The Maniac is DQ'd for using a keyring (tossed him by Jim Cornette) on Trent Knight; Morton d. The Avenger (Cruel Connection). RESTHOLD...a "Brady Bunch" plotline and Ricky is no actor.

(W. CLASS) - From Memphis: SST regain W. Class tag belts from Michael Hayes/Steve Cox; Ronnie Garvin d. Black Bart; Robert Gibson d. Tom Jones; Terry Gordy & Botswana Beast ends in bloodbath. Also, recap of Kerry-Lawler feud. **POWERSLAM-PLUS.**

(CMF) - Detroit Demolition d. Keith Steinborn; Ken Wayne vs. Willie B. Hert double COR; Grappler 11 (Rick Hazzard) d. Lee Peek; Austin Idol d. Mark Pyle; Tim Horner d. Alan Martin and fends off attack by Kokina; Jerry Stubbs/Tony Anthony d. Johnny & Davey Rich and attack after match until Bullet makes save and double DDTs Anthony & Stubbs. DRAW-PLUS...much better than last week.

(AWA) - Cactus Jack Foley/Gary Young d. Scott Steiner/Billy Travis; Tiejho Khan d. Mike Enos; Ronnie Garvin d. Alan Reynolds; Sgt. Slaughter wins DQ over Soldad Ustinov. **REPLAY:** last week's Kerry-Lawler title vs. title match. **RESTHOLD.**

(PMTW) - SCW, Jerry Lawler retains AWA title over Tommy Rich on reverse decision; WWF, Mean Gene Okerlund v. Honky Tonk Man; MEMPHIS, Robert Fuller buys Cactus Jack Foley a whip; W. CLASS, recap of Kerry-Lawler feud; AWA, Ronnie Garvin d. Greg Gagne for AWA TV title. MILKY WAY WRESTLER OF WEEK: Gene Okerlund. RESTHOLD (see BLOOPER AWARD for explanation).

(NWA/TBS) - A.M.: Eddie Gilbert d. Tommy Angel; Rick Steiner d. John Savage; Other winners: Ron Simmons, Russian Assassins, Shepherders, Al Perez & Larry Zbyszko. BOMB. P.M.: Nikita Koloff goes to double DQ with Russian Assassin II after RA 1 runs in with loaded headbutt. Uncle Ivan saves by using chain to choke Paul Jones. Other winners: Zbyszko/Perez, Bam Bam Bigelow, Simmons, Gilbert, Shepherders, Varsity Club, Kevin Sullivan, Dick Murdoch, Midnight Express. CLIP: Quick shot at end of Sting being carried out of Richmond ring injured. RESTHOLD. MAIN EVENT: All

repeat matches. BOMB.

(NWA/SYND.) - WORLD WIDE: Ric Flair & Barry Windham d. Agent Steel/Bret Holliday; Other winners: Fantastics, Bam Bam, Shepherders, Simmons, P & Z, RAs (who brawl with Nikita & Uncle Ivan after squash). STRAIGHT TALK: Magnum w. P & Z. RESTHOLD. NWA PRO: Midnight Express d. Tony Suber/Joe Cruze; Lex Luger d. Trent Knight; Other winners: Road Warriors, Windham, RAs, Bam Bam. LOUISVILLE SLUGGER: Jim Cornette w. Varsity Club. BOMB.

LINES OF THE WEEK - 1. Dutch Mantel, CWF: "Lee Peek's face sticks out like a 6-pack in a dry county." 2. Mantel, CWF: "I didn't get this nickname by kissing babies and shaking hands on Saturday night." 3. Yannick Bisson, LEARNING THE ROPES: "The magic just wasn't there without Ricky Morton." 4. Jim Ross, TBS: "I wouldn't say Paul Jones is giving the Assassin moral support because he has no morals." 5. Jim Cornette, TBS: "The Road Warriors are so depressed they carry a picture of Robin Givens in their wallets." 6. Cornette, NWA PRO: "He's (Steiner's) like a model house. The lights are on and nobody's home." 7. Bobby Heenan, WWF: "These Young Stallions look like they should be dating the Doublemint Twins." 8. Heenan, WWF, on Akeem's gyrations: "These look like outtakes from SOUL TRAIN." 9. Jesse Ventura, WWF, on crowd cheering for him: "How come everywhere we go, I never hear McMAHON...McMAHON!" 10. Mantel, CWF: "There's one difference between Grappler 1 & II: one went to Penn State and the other to State Pen."

STRONGEST COMMENT - J. Jerry Lawler, AWA: "The other two (Savage & Flair), as far as I'm concerned, are company champions."

BLOOPER AWARDS - 1. Joe Pedicino, PWITW: no one feels worse than Joe about this, I'm sure, but he gave Okerlund his W.O.W. award for "firing Brother Love" but the tape inserted from WWF was of Gene with Honky Tonk Man.

YOU'RE KIDDING AWARD - 1. Lee Marshall, AMA: "You're looking at one of the greatest wrestlers in this country in Soldad Ustinov."

BOD AWARD - NWA, for the ridiculous 2-hour teasing of an interview and details of the Road Warriors' attack on Sting and then only showing a 30-second clip of Sting's stretcher job. That kind of teasing only infuriates fans.

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MATWATCH

*213-PINE HILLS AVE

AUBURN AL 36830

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Michael Gendelman

49 Admiral Lane

Hicksville, NY 11801

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